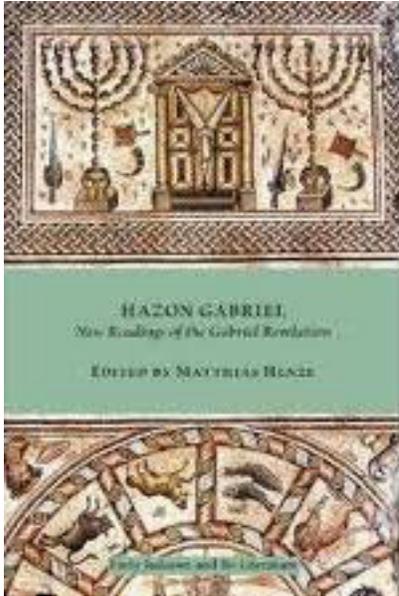


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**Henze, Matthias, ed.**

***Hazon Gabriel: New Readings of the Gabriel Revelation***

Early Judaism and Its Literature 29

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This volume is the first to be devoted to the “Hazon Gabriel” text, a “Dead Sea Scroll on stone” first published in 2007.<sup>1</sup> The stone is owned by David Jesselsohn, who contributed an essay to this volume on the discovery and publication of the text. The text is unprovenanced, but numerous lines of evidence suggest that it came from the region around the Dead Sea, probably on the eastern side. It appears from Jesselsohn’s narrative that it came into his possession around 1999, from the Jordanian antiquities dealer Ghassan Rihani. Over the next few years Jesselsohn had photographs taken by Zeev Radovan and those photographs read by Ada Yardeni. Not much happened, however, until 2005, when Yardeni, together with Binyamin Elitzur, began to work on the text in earnest, consulting with other scholars, such as Richard Steiner, and eventually publishing the text as “A Prophetic Text on Stone from the First Century BCE.”<sup>2</sup> Israel Knohl, who in 2000 had published a book arguing that the idea of a suffering messiah was to be found in texts from the century before Jesus, immediately got to work on this text,

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1. “Dead Sea Scoll in Stone” was the title of the article by Ada Yardeni in *BAR* 34/1 (2008): 60–61.

2. This article appeared in *Cathedra* 123 (2007): 155–66; Steiner’s contributions from 2006 are mentioned on p. 24 of the current volume.

publishing a popular article in *Haaretz* and a scholarly article in *Tarbiz* in 2007, then another article in the *Journal of Religion* in 2008.

All this scholarly attention, and some of the more dramatic claims submitted by Knohl, piqued wider interest in the text, and the *New York Times* ran an article about it in the summer of 2008. The claim that drew the most attention was Knohl's reading of line 80 in the text, said to say, לְשִׁלֹּשֶׁת יָמִים חַיִּיהָ "in three days, you shall live." The effect that this particular proposal had on the attention given to the text is described by Jesselsohn on pages 6–8.

This, however, was roundly criticized by other scholars, on both material and grammatical grounds. As Moshe Bar-Asher observed, nowhere in ancient Hebrew or Aramaic is an *aleph* used as a mater lectionis for a shortened *pataḥ* (/ă/), which is the expected vowel in *ḥāyē*. In the present volume, Knohl himself has abandoned the reading, and the suggestion first put forth by Ronald Hendel to read הַאוֹת "the sign" has garnered significant support.<sup>3</sup> Ironically, then, a proposal quickly abandoned even by its originator had the longer-lasting effect of drumming up more attention for a text than it otherwise would have had. The text, in my opinion, deserves the attention anyway.

Because the volume is a record of the conference papers and the conference papers were written before the participants knew that Knohl had dropped the suggestion to read הַאוֹת, there are a number of pages throughout the book dedicated to rejecting that view, now defended by no one. In this way, and others, the book presents scholarly work in progress, which is (as we all know) both exciting and frustrating.

The next chapter is an English version of the original Hebrew article by Yardeni and Elitzur, with only two small changes/corrections reflecting the views of other writers inserted. Chapter 3 is an "abbreviated version" of a very important article, also published originally in Hebrew in *Cathedra*, by Elisha Qimron and Alexey (Eliyahu) Yuditsky, which improves the reading significantly.

Following the two chapters on the material readings there is a chapter by Knohl in which he discusses very insightfully a number of the important themes and ideas in the text and, in a more exact way than anyone else, attempts to situate the text historically. His idea (retained from his earliest publications on the text) is to connect the text to events that took place in 4 B.C.E. in the wake of the death of Herod. Josephus tells of revolts that then erupted, including one led by a man named Simon, who fled to the Transjordan and was

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3. As noted by Henze, however (128), it is not clear what the line לְשִׁלֹּשֶׁת יָמִין הַאוֹת אֲנִי גַבְרִיאֵל "In three days [shall be?] the sign, I am Gabriel" means. Daewoong Kim has a suggestion on 166–71.

there killed. According to Knohl, this event contributed to the rise of the idea of “catastrophic messianism,” the notion that the defeat of the would-be messiah is in fact part of the process of redemption. Many are the implications of this suggestion, and it is one worth considering seriously, both with regard to the philological readings of the text that it relies on and engenders and with regard to the history of ideas.

Chapter 5 is a “grammatical sketch” of the text by Gary Rendsburg that updates his earlier article in *DSD* 16; while that article had (reasonably) been based on the *editio princeps* of the text, this one takes the readings of Qimron and Yuditsky as its starting point. Rendsburg also augmented this version by incorporating discussion of a number of issues raised by Moshe Bar-Asher in his discussion of the text’s language.<sup>4</sup> This makes the chapter a comprehensive discussion, with the caveat that the text is very incomplete. In order to discuss the grammar of the text, one needs to know what it says, and even in the lines where the text is preserved, this is not always a simple matter. How does one vocalize טְבַחְיָי: טְבַחְיָי (as Rendsburg would have it) or טְבַחְיָי (as Bar-Asher read)? If the scribe writes וְאֵגִיד in line 21 but וְאֵגִידָהּ in line 12, is he distinguishing between cohortative and indicative or not? Should וְאֵגִיד be pointed וְאֵגִידָהּ (as Qimron and Yuditsky do)? Or do we assume that the scribe has no idea what the difference is between these forms? Is קִטּוּט a *qittul* noun from קִטּוּט, or is it from ק(ו)ט, as in קִטּוּט קִטּוּט (Ezek 16:47)—again, a point on which Rendsburg and Bar-Asher are divided? No certainty is possible with regard to such issues, but Rendsburg is a reliable guide to them even when one may disagree with a particular understanding he embraces.

With the following chapter, formally a response to Knohl by Adela Yarboro Collins, the book moves into a different gear. This and the remaining chapters—“Gabriel and David: Some Reflections on an Enigmatic Text,” by John J. Collins; “Some Observations on the *Hazon Gabriel*,” by Henze; “Hosts, Holy Ones, and the Words of Gabriel: The Angelology of *Hazon Gabriel* in the Context of Second Temple and Late Antique Literature,” by Kelley Coblentz Bautch; “The Use of Daniel in the *Gabriel Revelation*,” by Daewoong Kim; and “‘Jerusalem’ in the *Gabriel Revelation* and the Revelation of John,” by David Capes—deal more with the ideas in and around the text than the specific readings of the text itself.

Yarboro Collins criticizes Knohl on the grounds that “most New Testament scholars” would not agree with the idea of catastrophic messianism, because they do not understand Jesus to have foreseen his messianic resurrection. This is true, but of course Knohl knows this and is challenging those scholars to reexamine the evidence. Perhaps he

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4. Bar-Asher, “על הלשון ב'חזון גבריאל',” *Meghillot* 7 (2009): 193–226, translated as “On the Language of ‘The Vision of Gabriel,’” *Revue de Qumran* 23 (2008): 491–524.

is wrong, but this chapter does not show it. The same is true for Collins's reiteration of the conventional wisdom regarding the "Messiah son of Joseph," which, it is argued, was the result of ideas developed in the wake of the failed revolt of Simon bar Kosiba. Again, this may be true (I continue to think that it is), but pointing out that Knohl's view disagrees with a formerly accepted view does not actually constitute an argument.

Henze's chapter is probably the best introduction to the text as a whole, since it surveys what is known of the contents of the text, section by section, highlighting important or controversial points along the way. Coblentz Bautch's article on angelology is a valuable discussion, taking the various beings mentioned in the text, such as מלאך, צבאות, and מרכבות, as starting points and surveying what is known of their beings within Second Temple and late antique Jewish literature. Also surveyed are the uses of the figures of Michael and Gabriel himself. All of this is interesting and valuable in itself but, as Coblentz Bautch says in her conclusion, "does not shed more light on the provenance or use of this composition, the way it was read or by whom," or even, one might add, on what it *means*.

Kim's chapter on the use of Daniel is interesting, although I am not entirely convinced that all of the "reactivations of original texts" described here were indeed intended by the author. This is, at least, a good discussion of some of the many biblical allusions in the text. Finally, Capes takes on the topic of "Jerusalem" in the text and compares it to the use of the image of the city in the book of Revelation. As it turns out, these books have in common "a great eschatological battle in which the nations of the world march against Jerusalem" and numerous smaller details, but the uses of the city are fundamentally different, in that Hazon Gabriel describes the real, earthly Jerusalem, whereas Revelation looks to victory and salvation only in a heavenly Jerusalem. Whether this difference is due to the century that elapsed between the two works, during which the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed, or whether divergent views regarding this question were to be found among Jews while the Second Temple yet stood, is worthy of further attention.

In sum, this volume is a very useful—one might even say indispensable—collection of articles relating to an exciting and tantalizing text. The Society of Biblical Literature is to be commended for publishing it, and especially for keeping the price at an eminently attainable level. The book captures much of the excitement around an important textual find and also shares with its readers some of the frustrations of dealing with the novelty of such a find. It is not desirable to simply read the text in light of what was previously thought, since that strips it of its power to make us rethink and revisit. But it is also not possible to overturn everything, especially on the basis of a text that is, after all, highly fragmentary. Finding those balances is the task of the text's interpreters, and this volume allows the reader to take part in this ongoing enterprise.